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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: "Mulch and Save"...Information from the gardening specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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Come hot weather and dry...comes the time when vegetables growing in our gardens -- our prides and joys almost at the maturing point by dent of our hard work -- are in danger of withering away and dying.

Yes...the long hot dry spells of the summer months often spell doom for some of our favorite plants. But it ain't necessarily so. The gardening specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture say we can fight drought. We can mulch and save. Save what? Why...our plants from drying up, ourselves from having to water them so often, and also we can save ourselves the trouble of having to weed quite so often. Because a coating of mulch discourages weeds.

Mulch, you know, is straw, dried lawn clippings, dried leaves. It's spread between rows and around plants early in the season before the soil dries out. And it should be only about a couple of inches thick. A little mulch does a lot of good...but that's no sign a really deep coating of it will do even more good. Because when mulching is too thick, it may defeat it's purpose by absorbing the water from any light rains and keeping it from the soil.

Besides conserving moisture and holding down weeds, mulch is valuable around tomato plants that aren't staked, around cucumbers and bush squash plants. It holds the fruit off the ground...keeps it clean and freer of certain rots carried in the soil.

Sometime before your garden soil dries out...you'll most likely want to take the advice of the specialists. So lay plans now to...mulch and save.

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